

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 17943

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y P A R A 3

E.O.: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, UR

SUBJECT: SINO-SOVIET BORDER DISPUTE: MAXWELL'S VIEWS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A. PEKING 2053; B. MOSCOW 7432

1. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERRITORIAL QUESTIONS RAISED BY NEVILLE MAXWELL DOES NOT QUITE TRACK WITH USLO'S NOTE IN PARA 3 REF A IN THAT THE QUESTION OF THE SO-CALLED "UNEQUAL" TREATIES--AT LEAST IN SOVIET EYES--IS SEPARATE FROM THE QUESTION OF WHAT THOSE TREATIES SAY ABOUT THE BORDER. ALIGNMENT. THE AREAS MENTIONED BY MAXWELL ARE AREAS WHERE BOTH SIDES APPARENTLY AGREE THAT QUESTIONS OF JURISDICTION EXIST. AS SOVIET MFA OFFICIALS RECENTLY TOLD (REF. B), THE 1964 AND 1969 BORDER
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 17943 280636Z

TALKS BEGAN WITH COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES, MAPS

BASED UPON THE OLD TREATIES. THE QUESTIONS WERE NOT BASED UPON THE VALIDITY OR "INEQUALITY" OF THE TREATIES PER SE, BUT UPON THEIR IMPRECISION OR IMCOMPETENESS IN CERTAIN AREAS.

2. WE ARE ALSO PUZZLED BY MAXWELL'S REFERENCE THAT THE CHINESE POSITION CLAIMING "ALL" OF THE DISPUTED AREAS REPRESENTS A HARDENING; IT WOULD SEEM THAT PEKING MUST CLAIM THEM OR THEY WOULD NOT BE DISPUTED. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, THE SOVIETS CURRENTLY OCCUPY ALL OF THE AREAS IN QUESTION EXCEPT FOR SOME OF THE ISLANDS ON THE CHINESE SIDE OF THE RIVERS. THE SOVIETS HAVE SHOWN NO SIGN OF WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW PENDING A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT AND SAY THAT THE CHINESE MUST FIRST AGREE TO NEGOTIATE AND SETTLE THE BORDER QUESTION AS A WHOLE BEFORE THERE CAN BE ANY QUESTION OF A PULLBACK FROM THE DISPUTED AREA. THE CHINESE, AS WE UNDERSTAND THEIR POSITION, CLAIM THAT THE DISPUTED TERRITORIES SHOULD NOT BE OCCUPIED BY EITHER SIDE UNTIL THEIR STATUS IS DETERMINED.

3. THE SORT OF SOLUTION THE SOVIETS SEEM TO ENVISAGE IS ONE WHICH GRANTS THE CHINESE CLAIM ON THE THALWEG (I.E. THE MIDDLE OF THE MAIN NAVIGATION CHANNELS OF THE RIVERS) WITH MAJOR EXCEPTION OF HEI HSIA-TSU DAO (BLINDMAN'S ISLAND) OPPOSITE Khabarovsk. THAT ISLAND, THEY INSIST, WILL NOT BE GIVEN UP UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES REGARDLESS OF THE THALWEG ISSUES. IN OTHER AREAS THE SOVIETS HAVE SAID THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO ADJUST THE LAND BORDERS THROUGH MUTUAL GIVE AND TAKE. WE HAVE NOT HEARD SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE "64 VILLAGE" AREA, BUT ONE SOVIET OFFICIAL (KAPITSA OF MFA), SPEAKING GENERALLY, SAID THAT ADJUSTMENTS SHOULD REFLECT ADMINISTRATIVE AND GEOGRAPHIC LOGIC, WHICH MAY IMPLY SOVIET FLEXIBILITY IN THIS AREA.

4. THE SOVIETS UNDERSTAND THAT THE CHINESE CALL FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE "UNEQUAL" NATURE OF THE 19TH CENTUARY TREATIES IS CURRENTLY AN ISSUE OF PRINCIPLE, NOT OF TERRITORY. HOWEVER, IN THEIR PRIVATE CHARGES
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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 17943 280636Z

ABOUT CHINESE CHAUVINISM, THE SOVIETS ASSERT THAT PEKING INTENDS TO USE SUCH AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AS A BASIS FOR MORE EXTENSIVE FUTURE CLAIMS. THEY DO NOT PRETEND THAT THE CHINESE HAVE ACTUALLY MADE SUCH CLAIMS TO DATE. BUT IN THEIR PROPAGANDA THEY CONVENIENTLY FORGET THAT DISTINCITION. HENCE THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THE SIZE OF THE TERRITORY ACTUALLY UNDER DISPUTE (ABOUT 33,000 SQUARE KILOMETERS) AND THE FIGURE OF 1.5 MILLION

SQUARE KILOMETERS, WHICH THE SOVIETS OFTEN BROADCAST
AS THE TERRITORY CHINA WANTS.

5. BASED ON OUR SOUNDINGS HERE, MAXWELL IS PROBABLY
RIGHT IN STATING THAT THE CHINESE HAVE BECOME FIRMER
IN THEIR POSITION RECENTLY, EVEN TO THE POINT OF INTRANSIGENCE.
THE ISSUE ON BOTH SIDES IS FUNDAMENTALLY A POLITICAL
ONE. NEVERTHELESS, BOTH SIDES APPEAR TO TAKE THEIR
LEGAL ARGUMENTS SERIOUSLY. IT IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL,
IN OUR VIEW, TO DISTINGUISH THOSE ELEMENTS IN BOTH
SIDES' POSITION WHICH ARE CONSTANT FROM THOSE WHICH
MAY OCCASIONALLY BE MODIFIED. WE WOULD APPRECIATE
ANY ADDITIONAL VIEWS FROM WASHINGTON, PEKING OR HONG
KONG TO HELP IN CLARIFYING TH SOVIET AND CHINESE
PERCEPTIONS OF THESE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES BETWEEN THEM.
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